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# JOURNAL OF THE

## SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

*for Private Circulation amongst Members and Associates only*

FEBRUARY, 1948

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### NEW MEMBERS

**Arnold, James F.**, 902 Pine Street, Winnetka, Illinois, U.S.A.  
**Benjamin, Dr Alva**, 11 Welbeck House, 62 Welbeck Street, London, W. 1.  
**Davie, Paul C.**, 26 Halsey Street, London, S.W. 3.  
**Dundas, Miss I.**, 6 Strathearn Place, London, W. 2.  
**Frost, G. B.**, 225 Bellegrove Road, Welling, Kent.  
**Hawkins, Peter**, Caldonia, Gunters Lane, Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex.  
**Hearn, Miss I. R.**, 7 Powis Square, London, W. 11.  
**Holmes, Mrs A. M.**, The Row, Barrow-on-Trent, Derby.  
**Hone, Mrs M. E.**, 122 Beaufort Street, Chelsea, London, S.W. 3.  
**Kehlmann, William H.**, 2432 Ocean Avenue, Brooklyn 29, New York, U.S.A.  
**Mann, Miss B. P.**, 13 Ashdown Gardens, London, S.W. 7.  
**Maria, René**, 16 Bahnhofstrasse, Zurich, Switzerland.  
**McConnell, Dr Robert A.**, 151 Center Avenue, Emsworth, Pittsburgh 2, Penna., U.S.A.  
**Mifelew, Chan**, 3a Cumberland Court, London, W. 1.  
**Schul, Israel**, P.O.B. 1119, Haifa, Palestine.  
**Snape, Rev. H. C.**, Skelton Rectory, Penrith, Cumberland.  
**Turner, R. C.**, 25 Tintern Avenue, Flixton, Manchester.  
**Underwood, A. P.**, 8 Westholm, Letchworth, Herts.  
**Van Rijn, B. P. A.**, Bezuidenhout 127, The Hague, Holland.  
**Whiteman, Miss W. E.**, 17 Gt Cumberland Place, London, W. 1.

# INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1947

FREDERIC W. H. MYERS MEMORIAL FUND

Dr.

Cr.

EXPENDITURE		INCOME	
To Ninth Myers Memorial Lecture:		By Interest on Investments (Nett)	£21 2 6
Lecturer's Fee	£42 0 0	" Income Tax Recovered and Recoverable	15 3 9
Hire of Hall and Sundry Expenses	10 6 0	" Interest on Deposit Account	7 0
	£52 6 0	" Sales of Lectures	6 12 11
		" Balance Excess of Expenditure over Income for the year	43 6 2
	£52 6 0		8 19 10
			£52 6 0

## BLANNERHASSETT RESEARCH FUND.

To Grant to the Society for Psychological Research Endowment Fund	30 0 0	By Interest on Investments (Gross)	£34 2 3
" Balance being Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year	4 2 11	" Refund of Postages	8
	£34 2 11		£34 2 11

## RESEARCH ENDOWMENT FUND.

To Salary of Research Officer	-	By Interest on Investments (Nett)	-
" Apparatus	-	" Income Tax Recovered and Recoverable	-
" Sitings with Mediums and Note-Taking	-	" Grant from Blennerhassett Fund	-
" Clerical Work on Combined Index	-	" Donation—Professor H. H. Price	-
" Travelling and General Research Expenses	-		-
	538 5 10		-
" Balance being Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year	148 4 9		-
	£686 10 7		-
			£451 14 11
			194 15 8
			30 0 0
			10 0 0
			£686 10 7



# INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER, 1947

## GENERAL FUND.

EXPENDITURE			INCOME		
<i>To Office Expenses:</i>			<i>By Subscriptions:</i>		
Rent	-	£240 0 0	Members (1924)	-	2 2 0
Rates	-	57 4 0	(1936)	-	2 2 0
Insurance	-	10 11 0	(1946)	-	9 2 8
Fuel and Lighting	-	79 0 4	(1947)	-	1,205 2 3
Salary Assistant Secretary	-	250 0 0			£1,218 8 11
Clerical Assistance	-	22 11 2	Associates (1946)	-	1 1 0
Cleaning and Cartaker's Wages and Uniform	-	242 1 1	(1947)	-	106 6 8
Stationery and General Printing	-	120 15 6			107 7 8
Telephone	-	18 18 6			£1,325 16 7
Postages	-	120 8 1			15 18 0
Repairs	-	62 3 5			
Sundry Expenses	-	15 17 10			
		£1,239 10 11			
<i>Cost of Printing and Binding Publications:</i>			<i>Less Charges for collection in U.S.A.</i>		
Proceedings	-	242 15 4			
Journal	-	303 16 5			
Pamphlets	-	23 18 3			
		£570 10 0			
<i>Less</i> Proceeds of Sales	-	237 14 0			
		332 16 0			
<i>Expenses of Meetings</i>					
" Pension—Miss I. Newton	-	33 15 5			
" Audit Fee	-	175 0 0			
" Library	-	21 0 0			
		7 19 11			
		£1,830 2 3			
<i>Total Ordinary Expenditure</i>			<i>Total Ordinary Income</i>		
		£1,830 2 3			£1,738 12 5
			<i>Donations:</i>		
			Miss Grignon	-	£1 19 0
			Miss M. Baker	-	5 0 0
			Miss Candler	-	1 1 0
			Mr D. J. Lewis	-	2 10 6
			Mr W. E. Leslie	-	1 0 0
					11 10 6
			<i>Total Income</i>		
					£1,750 2 11
			<i>" Balance being Excess of Expenditure over Income for the year</i>		
					79 19 4
					£1,830 2 3

# BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 1947

## LIABILITIES

### Myers Memorial Fund:

Estimated Value of Assets less Liabilities at  
31st December, 1946 - £1,283 12 9  
Less Excess of Expenditure over Income for  
the year - 8 19 10

£1,274 12 11

### Blennerhassett Research Fund:

Estimated Value of Assets less Liabilities at  
31st December, 1946 - 1,029 11 10  
Add Gift by Mrs Blennerhassett - 500 0 0  
Receipt of £1 per cent. on Conversion of  
Defence Bonds - 10 0 0  
Excess of Income over Expenditure for the  
year - 4 2 11

1,543 14 9

### Research Endowment Fund:

Estimated value of Assets less Liabilities at  
31st December, 1946 - 18,684 13 0  
Add Excess of Income over Expenditure for  
the year - 148 4 9

18,832 17 9

### Annual Subscriptions Received in Advance

Sundry Creditors - £21,651 5 5  
Life Membership Account: - 156 9 0  
Estimated Value at 31st December, 1946 - 149 18 5  
Add Life Subscriptions received during year  
to date - 1,029 0 0  
207 18 0

Less Transfer to Income and Expenditure  
Account - 1,236 18/ 0  
102 18 0

Balance being 50% of existing Life Members'  
Subscriptions - 1,134 0 0

1,134 0 0

Forward

£23,091 12 10

## ASSETS

### Myers Memorial Fund:

Cash at Bank - 162 14 2  
Income Tax Recoverable - 5 1 3  
Investments at Book Value, as per Schedule - 1,106 17 6

£1,274 12 11

### Blennerhassett Research Fund:

Cash at Bank - 43 14 9  
Investments at Book Value, as per Schedule - 1,500 0 0

1,543 14 9

### Research Endowment Fund:

Cash at Bank and in Hand - 1,122 7 11  
Income Tax Recoverable - 66 19 6  
Investments at Book Value, as per Schedule - 17,643 10 4

18,832 17 9

£21,651 5 5

£2,818 7 8

Forward

£21,651 5 5

## BALANCE SHEET (Continued) 31st DECEMBER 1947

		Forward				General Fund:				Forward			
		23	09	12	10					21	65	1	5
General Fund:													
Estimated Value of Assets less Liabilities at 31st December, 1946		£9,888 13 1				Cash at Bank and in Hand				£1,191 0 4			
Less Excess of Expenditure over Income for the year		79 19 4				Amounts not yet received for sales of Publications				16 12 1			
		9,808 13 9				Income Tax Recoverable				44 19 0			
						Investments at Book Value, as per Schedule				9,886 18 0			
						Office Furniture, Library, etc., (Purchases prior to 31st December, 1946 remaining unvalued)				104 17 6			
						Payments in Advance				4 14 3			
										11,249 1 2			
										£32,900 6 7			

### Report of the Auditors to the Members of the Society for Psychical Research:

We have audited the Balance Sheet and accompanying Income and Expenditure Accounts of your Society dated 31st December 1947. In our opinion such Balance Sheet and Income and Expenditure Accounts are properly drawn up so as to exhibit a true and correct view of the state of the Society's affairs, according to the best of our information and as shown by the books of the Society. We have also verified the investments of the General, Research Endowment, Myers Memorial and Blennerhassett Research Funds.

MIALL, SAVAGE, AVERY & CO.,

Chartered Accountants,

9 Idol Lane, London, E.C. 3

7 February, 1948



## SCHEDULE OF INVESTMENTS

	Nominal	Book Value	Value 31st December 1947
<i>Myers Memorial Fund :</i>			
3½% Conversion Stock 1961	£250 0 0	£287 10 0	£262 16 0
3% Savings Bonds 1960/70 -	750 0 0	819 7 6	757 10 0
		<u>£1,106 17 6</u>	<u>£1,020 6 0</u>
<i>Blennerhassett Research Fund :</i>			
2½% Defence Bonds - -	1,500 0 0	1,500 0 0	<u>£1,500 0 0</u>
<i>Endowment Fund :</i>			
4% Consols - - -	1,460 0 0	1,699 1 6	1,576 16 0
3% Funding Stock 1959/69 -	2,300 0 0	2,504 2 6	2,334 10 0
3½% War Stock 1952 or after	800 0 0	864 0 0	815 0 0
London and North Eastern Railway 4% Debenture Stock	1,797 0 0	2,066 11 0	2,049 9 10
Great Western Railway 5% Rent Charge Stock - -	1,055 0 0	1,429 12 6	1,413 14 0
5% Guaranteed Stock -	800 0 0	1,080 0 0	1,060 0 0
London Midland and Scottish Railway 4% Preference Stock - - -	2,258 0 0	1,896 14 5	1,862 17 0
London Passenger Transport Board 3% Guaranteed Stock 1967/72 - - -	514 0 0	539 14 0	496 0 2
3% Defence Bonds - - -	1,000 0 0	1,073 15 0	1,015 0 0
3% Savings Bonds 1960/70 -	3,157 9 2	3,449 9 5	3,189 0 7
2½% Australia Stock 1967/71	995 2 9	1,040 10 0	955 6 6
		<u>£17,643 10 4</u>	<u>£16,767 14 1</u>
<i>General Fund :</i>			
2½% Annuities - - -	58 11 2	56 11 1	47 8 8
2½% Consols - - -	1,139 4 5	1,116 9 11	931 6 2
4% Consols - - -	86 11 11	100 15 4	93 1 4
3½% Conversion Stock 1961	219 8 7	252 6 10	230 12 9
3½% War Stock 1952 or after	309 9 9	334 4 11	315 5 6
York 3% Redeemable Stock 1955/65 - - -	800 0 0	848 0 0	808 0 0
Australia 3% Stock 1955/58	250 0 0	262 10 0	250 0 0
Nigeria 3% Stock 1955 -	1,200 0 0	1,272 0 0	1,224 0 0
London Midland and Scottish Railway 4% Debenture Stock - - -	1,161 0 0	1,340 19 1	1,329 6 9
4% Preference Stock -	562 0 0	472 1 7	465 13 0
East India Railway Deferred Annuity Class D. - -	23 8 0	590 17 0	549 18 0
3% Savings Bonds 1960/70 -	3,000 0 0	3,240 2 3	3,030 0 0
		<u>£9,886 18 0</u>	<u>£9,274 12 2</u>

## MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

THE 433rd Meeting of the Council was held at 31 Tavistock Square, London, W.C. 1, on Friday, 30 January 1948, at 4 p.m. THE PRESIDENT, Mr W. H. Salter, in the Chair. The Minutes of the last Meeting of the Council were read and signed as correct. Twenty new Members were elected; their names and addresses are given above.

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## MEETING OF THE SOCIETY

THE 197th Private Meeting of the Society was held in the Society's Rooms on Thursday, 22 January 1948, at 6 p.m., when a paper on "Hand-writing in Automatic Script" was read by Mr James Leigh.

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## EMERGENCE OF AN APPARENTLY PSEUDO-COMMUNICATOR

WE are indebted to Mrs Frank Heywood for the following account of an interesting sitting with Mrs Edith Thomson, a well-known trance medium.

I arranged a sitting with Mrs Thomson on July 7th, 1947, in the hopes of getting information about a German friend, a Silesian landowner, of whose fate I knew nothing. I thought it probable that a person of his integrity had got into trouble with the Nazis or had been killed or deported by the Russians; and the sitting might be useful evidentially if it produced information subsequently confirmed. Mrs Thomson did not know me and the only people in England who had any links with my friendship with the German, eleven years ago in America, were my husband and my two sons, who were children at the time. Of the two other foreigners mentioned by Mrs Thomson during the sitting, I know nobody in England who has ever heard of one, and only one person, my family apart, of the other. My family was away from London at the time of the sitting and did not know I was having it. Normal leakage seems incredible, and it is hard to imagine how Mrs Thomson could have got the names she did otherwise than by E.S.P.

The sitting was a long one and I only took notes of salient points. The ostensible control said that there were a young man and a girl present. The young man was Robert and he had passed owing to chest trouble. Here the medium coughed painfully. I was not encouraging, for my friend's name was not Robert, though like it—I will call him Rupert—and it was not until later that I remembered that a cousin of mine, called Robert, had died of T.B. after being wounded in Libya. I had not thought of him for a long time.

The medium soon began to talk as if Rupert himself were communicating directly and her remarks were reasonably in character. For instance "Rupert" said that at last he had time for contemplation. I had always looked upon him as a natural contemplative. He talked about time as we



know it being an illusion. I had recently been pondering a good deal on this subject. At one point the control interpolated, "Robin", in a tentative way. After more conversation I said, "You must remember, Rupert that *I* cannot see *you*." This aroused a burst of most genuine-seeming emotion on the part of "Rupert", who said I had reminded him that was not altogether himself talking to me. He was apparently so upset that the control took over, saying that he must rest. The control then remarked that I had a letter from "Rupert" in my bag, which was correct, for I had brought, though not produced, an old letter, in case it might be psychometrically useful. It talked more about him, saying correctly that he was interested in music and so on, and later that his passing had been swift. Then it said, "The name is R—there's a P—Rupert," with no help whatever from me. After more transmission of remarks from "Rupert" the control said, "Stefan—he might be called a rebel—against tyranny. That's what got him into trouble." This is an only too apt description of a Hungarian-Italian friend of mine. His rebellion against tyranny got him into Dachau. I know him as Istvan, but his Italian relations have written to me about him as Stefano. I had not heard from him for some weeks and he was not in my conscious mind.

The control then gave a description of "Rupert's" appearance which I did not recognise. He tried to laugh this off with another description also incorrect, and then suddenly asked me if I remembered our walks by the river. At first I said "No", but a moment later I did remember that we had been for many such walks by the Potomac. "Rupert" seemed distressed that I did not remember and reminded me of walking the plank. This was an apt allusion to an occasion when "Rupert", a good mountaineer, had tried to persuade me to cross a high aqueduct, two bricks wide or thereabouts, over a frozen river, an incident far from my conscious mind. He then reminded me of the wall round my garden, to which he replied that there was no wall. "Protection then," he said, which was also applicable in a particular way to the time I knew him, for I planted a hedge round my little garden in Washington, in which he took an interest. The hedge had caused quite a sensation, because Americans do not enclose their gardens. He also mentioned having spilt something on my carpet. This I could not and cannot remember. He added that it did not seem much good trying to produce evidence if I did not remember anything.

Suddenly, apropos of nothing, the control said, "How is Poppet?" This had no meaning for me until I remembered, but did not say, that I sometimes laughingly call my husband, "Poppet". Shortly afterward the control said, with evident satisfaction, "Frank is Poppet." I had mentioned my husband earlier, as this gave away nothing not easily known to Mr Thomson had she previously done any detective work about me. I had not mentioned "Poppet"; the casual joke could not have been further from my conscious mind. A little later the control said, gropingly "Grace—Cicely—Natalie." To arrive at Natalie was a surprise to me, for it was the name of an American friend, killed in an air crash in 1937, known to none of my friends in England, except my husband, and of whom I had scarcely thought for years. Rupert had known her and the control said she was the girl "Rupert" was with.

After a little more talk about the horror of war, how "Rupert" felt after



his death and so on, the control said, "P—that's the surname." Rupert's surname does begin with P. Later the control said that he seemed to have died further away than Europe, which did not surprise me as I feared he might have been deported to Siberia.

After the sitting I had a chat with Mrs Thomson, who seemed to be a person of real integrity and to have no conscious knowledge of what had taken place at it.

Some time before, I had set going enquiries through the Control Commission in Berlin and other sources as to Rupert's fate, but had been told that there was no trace of him. Some weeks after I heard that he had been traced to a neutral country, having escaped both Nazis and Russians, and that he was happily married. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the medium, while in trance, built up a communicator from genuine telepathic information from my mind: some of it was what I consciously feared might have happened, but more, such as the correct names and facts—Robert, who had died of T.B.; Natalie; Stefan the rebel; Poppet, and so on—were in my subconscious mind. None of these was in any way given away to the medium by anything I said or did.

If Rupert had in fact died and I had received information of his death subsequently to the sitting, I should have had to assess it as without watertight evidence of survival, but as containing:

- (a) A fair amount of evidence of character.
- (b) A knowledge of past events.
- (c) An account of Rupert's reactions to the war and after death in keeping with what I should have expected of him. (These are not given above.)
- (d) Attempts to give evidence of identity.

Reflection on the sitting in the light of subsequent knowledge suggests that the ostensible control was skilfully using a much-practised technique in building up the desired character, and particularly in providing items popular with sitters, from telepathic clues. I had the curious impression that the control, whoever or whatever it may have been, was itself convinced of the authenticity of "Rupert", its own apparent creation.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### BORLEY RECTORY

DEAR SIR,—Was Borley Rectory the most haunted house in England? The recent reprint of *The End of Borley Rectory* raises the question once again and, as it seems to me, an unfavourable answer must be given.

Mr Price's two books *The Most Haunted House in England* and *The End of Borley Rectory* are not serious contributions to the subject of haunting. They are written in a popular style in the tradition of the best ghost stories. One has only to look at the chapter headings to realise this: "A Night of Miracles", "'Moving Day' and a Golden Apport", "The Enchanted

'Tea Garden' ", " 'Truth' at the Bottom of a Well? ", etc. One does not expect accuracy of statement with such a style and neither does one find it. Here are a few criticisms among many which could be made.

*The observers.* Most of the observers nominated by Mr Price were unacquainted with psychical research. He appears to consider this desirable for he writes, "I wanted *independent evidence* from intelligent, competent, and cultured strangers who were *not* spiritualists; and if they knew nothing about psychical research, so much the better." There may have been something to say for this attitude sixty or seventy years ago when to show any interest in this subject might have rendered one suspect. At the present time, however, when psychical research is recognised at Universities both in England and America such an attitude is out of date. One has only to think of the outcry there would be if the opportunity of investigating some rare phenomena in any other subject was thrown away by inviting "cultured strangers" to investigate instead of those who had studied the subject. It is to be hoped that other investigators will not follow Mr Price's example in this matter.

*The phantom nun.* The principal witnesses to the appearance of the "nun" were the Misses Bull and a carpenter named Cartwright. No attempt, however, appears to have been made to have obtained signed statements from them or even to give the reader a verbatim report of what they said.

In the case of the Misses Bull, Mr Price states that his account "is a composite report, from notes, composed from information given to me by my secretary and me on June 13, 1929; from another interview, over a cup of tea, that Mr Sidney H. Glanville and I had with the ladies on Wednesday March 29, 1939; and from notes that Mr Glanville made when he met Miss Ethel Bull and her sister at Pinner on June 25, 1938."

In estimating the value of the evidence given by Miss Ethel Bull it must be remembered that she also told Mr Price that some of the coffins in the crypt of Borley Church had several times been mysteriously moved from their prescribed positions. Investigations, however, carried out in 1941 with the help of the Rector and a firm of masons failed to reveal any trace of a crypt.

Mr Cartwright's account of how he saw the "nun" four times in two weeks was obtained "over a pint of ale at the 'White Horse'."

Were the Misses Bull and Mr Cartwright ever given the opportunity of approving the summary which Mr Price has given of their accounts? We are not told, but in any case stories obtained "over a cup of tea" and "over a pint of ale" can hardly be taken seriously.

*The wall messages.* These were messages, partly incoherent, which appeared written on the walls during the tenancy of the Rev. and Mr Foyster. No one saw them appear and no one admitted to having written them. It was therefore assumed that they had been supernormally produced. Surely rather inadequate grounds for such an assumption!

These wall messages are not, of course, unique in the annals of psychical research. Similar phenomena were recorded in "The Great Amherst Mystery" when "Esther Cox you are mine to kill" was once inscribed on one of the walls. Dr Prince, however, after a lengthy study of the case (*Proceedings American S.P.R.*, Vol. XIII, pages 89 to 130)



showed that they were written by Esther Cox herself, unknowingly, while in a state of dissociation.

Possibly the Borley messages were written by Mrs Foyster while in a similar state of dissociation. She was in poor health,—several times we are told she was ill in bed and once collapsed for no apparent reason in the arms of Dom Richard Whitehouse,—and the curious way she had of putting the i in her christian name by means of a downward dash instead of a dot is reproduced in the photograph of the wall message beginning "Marianne at get help. . . ." This photograph also shows Mrs Foyster's normal handwriting.

Mr Price states that the wall markings continued to appear after the Foysters had left and during the period his observers were in the house. These markings, however, were nothing like the messages, being mainly faint "squiggles". As each "squiggle" was found it was ringed with chalk and dated. There is, however, nothing to prove that it was not there all the time but unnoticed in spite of some observers being practically certain it was not there during a previous search. Faint "squiggles" unnoticeable with the light in one direction may become apparent both visually and photographically at another period of the day when the light comes from a different angle.

Mr Price microscopically examined some of the material with which the "Marianne" messages were written and found it was indistinguishable from pencil lead. Did he examine the "squiggles" in like manner or were they merely slight cracks in the plaster?

Possibly some of Mr Price's observers were not above pulling his leg. The disadvantage of employing even "cultured strangers" becomes painfully apparent when one is asked to accept on their word phenomena which are contrary to all normal experience.

*The séances.* Mediums of proved ability might have had something interesting to say about the Borley haunting, but during Mr Price's many years of investigation he does not mention having asked even one well known medium to visit the Rectory. Instead, many pages are devoted to recording in detail inexperienced attempts at table turning at which answers generally only "Yes" or "No" were given to leading questions. It is hardly necessary to say that when table-turning phenomena are so weak supernatural information is not to be expected. Even Mr Price admits that much of the information is contradictory, yet it is on such data together with some equally unsatisfactory planchette messages that the phantom "nun" is identified as the "Marie Lairre" of the séance messages and a highly improbable story of intrigue and murder is evolved. This makes exciting reading but there is no reason to suppose that it corresponds in any way with the real history of Borley.

Probably the most important planchette message was that recorded by Mr Price in Chapter 27 of *The Most Haunted House in England*. He writes, "One startling piece of information or prediction—fulfilled to the letter—was obtained at a planchette seance at Streatham." This message was obtained on March 27, 1938, and the relevant part was as follows: "Sunex Amures and one of his men (indistinct) MEAN TO BURN THE RECTORY tonight at 9 o'clock end of the haunting. . . ." Later it was asked, "In which room will the fire start?" and answered, "Over the hall."

In actual fact the fire was not caused supernormally but by a pile of books which Capt. Gregson was dusting falling on to a lamp and upsetting it, the fire did not occur on March 27th at 9 o'clock but February 27th at midnight and the haunting did not end with the fire but according to reports continued long after it. Also the lamp was overturned in the main hall and consequently the fire must have started there and not in the room or the hall.

If this is what Mr Price calls a literal fulfilment, of what value are the other statements which cannot be checked by the reader?

It is, of course, a difficult matter to investigate a haunted house and it is easy to criticise. These criticisms, however, are only put forward in the hope that they will be adequately answered and the case strengthened by taking the Borley haunting seriously.

Yours faithfully,

B. NISBET

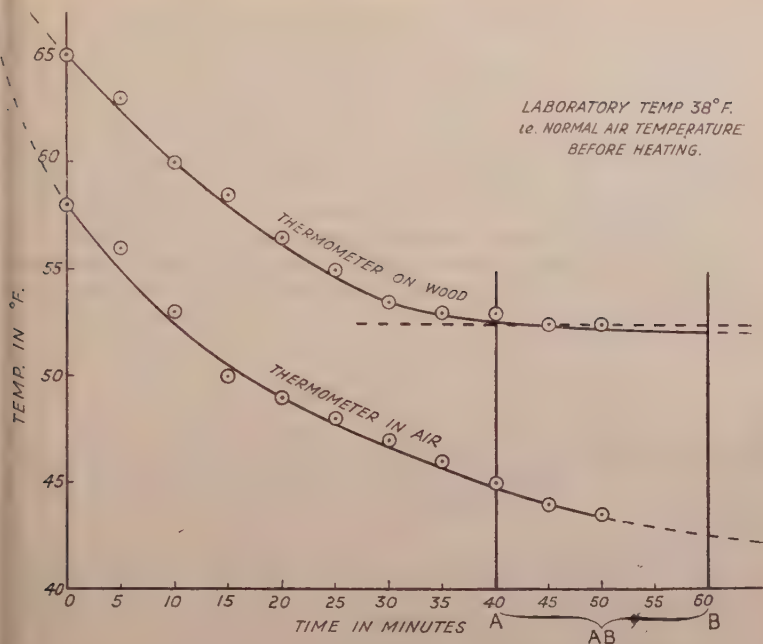
#### THE ALLEGED THERMAL PHENOMENON AT BORLEY

DEAR SIR,—“Visit 14” in the report of the Cambridge Commission on Borley included a series of readings taken from two thermometers, which on first scrutiny seemed quantitative evidence for the existence of a “cold spot”. The arrangement was as follows: Thermometer *A* was secured in a test tube by means of a rubber stopper “and placed as far as possible on the cold spot”. (This had been reconstructed after the fire, by laying a plank from wall to wall.) Thermometer *B* was “freely exposed” the bulb “resting on the wood”. Readings were taken between 1.00 a.m. and 3.00 a.m. at ten minute intervals, and while thermometer *B* remained steady at 65.1° F., thermometer *A* fell from 60.2° to 54.0° F., a fall (including the original discrepancy) of 11.1°. The conclusion was that heat was being selectively withdrawn from the region immediately surrounding the enclosed thermometer—an attractive proposition in the light of the “heat to energy” theory of poltergeist manifestations.

I was struck, however, by the fact that the figures gave no indication of the changes which had given rise to the initial difference of 4.9° F. There were two possibilities. Either the process of selective heat withdrawal had already been manifesting itself, or cooling was taking place at a different rate above and below the plank. In the latter case, it seemed probable that the surface temperature of the wood might be affecting the reading of thermometer *B*. Since the day temperature of the air and consequently that of the wood was no doubt higher than 65.1°, cooling at the surface would result in heat being conducted from the centre of the plank to the surface. It was conceivable, therefore, that a point would be reached where the rate of withdrawal of heat from the surface due to the falling air temperature was just equal to the amount of heat being conducted to the surface from the warmer interior. At this point the thermometer *A* would remain steady, but thermometer *A* would continue to fall.

In order to verify this hypothesis, I attempted as far as possible to recreate the conditions in the laboratory. An enclosed thermometer and another resting on a block of wood 2" x 2" were set up in a reasonably draught-proof situation. The air temperature was 58.0° F. (The actual





Time	Thermometer in Test Tube in Air	Thermometer on Wood
0 min.	58.0° F.	65.0° F.
5 "	56.0° F.	63.0° F.
10 "	53.0° F.	60.0° F.
15 "	50.0° F.	58.5° F.
20 "	49.0° F.	56.5° F.
25 "	48.0° F.	55.0° F.
30 "	47.0° F.	53.5° F.
35 "	46.0° F.	53.0° F.
40 "	45.0° F.	53.0° F.
45 "	44.0° F.	52.5° F.
50 "	43.5° F.	52.5° F.

Temperatures approximately to nearest .5 of a degree.

day temperature was  $38.0^{\circ}$ ). The block was heated separately, the surface temperature being  $65.0^{\circ}$  and the internal temperature  $67^{\circ}$ . Readings were then taken at five minute intervals and the results graphed as shown.

From this it can be seen that a series of readings taken over a period  $A$  would approximate to the Borley "phenomenon". The duration of the state of equilibrium would, of course, be determined by the rate of cooling of the air, but might well last over two hours. A quantitative proof would require the equating of the rate of heat removal at the surface with the rate of conduction in the block. One would require to know however, how the thermometer on the wood was affected by the surface temperature. I think, however, that clearly this is, regretfully enough, the true explanation of the phenomenon.

ALLEN J. SHAR

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SIR,—In connection with the Research Officer's remarks on Mr Ballard Thomas's dream, it may be of interest to point out that J. W. Dunne, *An Experiment with Time*, suggested that the *déjà vu* sensation might be due to precognition.

A graduated series can be traced. First there is the fully-remembered precognitive dream; next come cases like Mr Ballard Thomas's, in which forgotten details of the dream are recalled by the event; then others like those of Hone and Shelley (quoted by Andrew Lang in *Dreams and Ghosts*) in which the very existence of the dream is forgotten until the event occurs. Finally, in the typical *déjà vu* experience there is no memory of a dream at all; but the other cases suggest that there may have been a dream for all that.

I do not suggest, however, that this explanation applies to all cases. In the few instances in which I have experienced the *déjà vu* sensation, it has usually been immediately preceded by a period of abstraction. The precognition may have occurred during this period.

Finally, there are cases in which the sensation continues for long periods. These seem to be pathological; but even here it is as difficult to prove that the feeling is an illusion as to prove that it is due to precognition.

Mr Eric Cuddon's case, reported in the same number of the *Journal*, is of a type closely allied to *déjà vu* and almost equally common. It occurs in two forms: (1) The subject is walking along the street, thinking of nothing in particular, when the thought of his friend X comes into his head; soon afterwards he meets X. (2) Without any previous thought of X, he looks up and sees him walking towards him. A moment later he realises that it is not X at all but a total stranger, only vaguely like him. He walks on, and meets the real X round the next corner.

Remove the stranger who acted as a *point de repère* in the second form, and you have a full-blown *doppelgänger* hallucination; but this is of course much rarer.

Yours faithfully,

G. F. DALTON



# REVIEW

*The Reach of the Mind.* By J. B. RHINE. (Published by William Sloane Associates, Inc., New York, 1947.)

It is not easy to write entertainingly about statistical experiments in extra-sensory cognition or psychokinesis unless one has a theory to expound, in which case, as in Mr Carington's *Telepathy*, one can pack a rather dull summary of the card-guessing and dice-throwing results into a few preliminary pages and then proceed to the theory and its more picturesque implications. So far as I can judge Dr Rhine has no theory which covers the field of psychical phenomena, but in spite of this handicap he has written a very interesting book. The aim, apparently, is to provide the intelligent but non-technical reader with a fairly complete survey of the research into Clairvoyance, Precognition, Telepathy and Psychokinesis that has been carried out at Duke University and elsewhere since about the year 1932. Considered as a piece of exposition the book is a great advance on *New Frontiers of the Mind* and the last three chapters on the implications of the research are I think the best in the book.

It is of course extremely difficult for an Englishman who has had no personal contact with any of the experimenters or witnessed any of the experiments to form a sound estimate of the true value of the vast volume of research that has been turned out by Duke University and other U.S.A. institutions during the past fifteen years.

The precautions taken, as described in a report, may sound impressive but vital details may have been suppressed which, had they been mentioned, might reveal only too clearly loop-holes for fraud on the part of someone concerned in the tests. We do know that positive results in card-guessing and dice-throwing have been reported in America on a scale for which there is no parallel in this country. Apart from one or two borderline cases, the only persons in England who have obtained positive results in card-guessing (or a similar technique) under reasonably good conditions are Mr G. N. M. Tyrrell and myself. A considerable number of young men both in London and Cambridge have been experimenting assiduously for months and years without a gleam of success. It can hardly be that they are all "bad experimenters". If the American claims are all genuine we should be forced to assume that the psychic faculty is extremely rare in England compared with America.

Let us look at a few of these American claims. It is reported that Miss Margaret Pegram and a Miss Price tested the inmates of a school for the blind and found that "about one out of every three of the inmates scored significantly above chance" (p. 137). Is this really credible? It is further reported that this same Miss Pegram watched a little girl called Lillian achieve a perfect score of 25 correct hits with a pack of Zener cards (p. 147). We are told also that Miss Pegram was the first person outside of Duke University to obtain positive results in the dice-throwing experiments (p. 102). Miss Pegram must be a very remarkable person.

Dr Rhine makes no less than seven references to the unwitnessed experiments of B. F. Riess with a girl whose name is not even given and whose whereabouts does not seem to be known. According to Riess this girl sitting in a house a quarter of a mile away, guessed 20 cards right out of 2 and performed this feat over a score of times. Her average per 25 was 1 over a series of 74 runs. Then we are told she had a nervous breakdown, was treated for hyperthyroidism, lost her powers completely and disappeared into the unknown.

I can find no mention of the telepathic horse which pranced in the pages of *Extra-Sensory Perception*.

The unfortunate effect which these and similar stories have upon British psychologists and men of science is to make them suspicious of the whole American bag of tricks. This is a pity, for I feel convinced that some of the work in extra-sensory perception done at Duke University under Dr Rhine and at Columbia under Dr Gardner Murphy is essentially sound and of real importance.

It cannot however be denied that at Duke University there has been a radical change in the experimental situation since 1934. Round about that year Dr Rhine reported on the feats of numerous high-scoring subjects, all discovered apparently within the narrow precincts of Duke University. If these subjects have petered out, surely in thirteen years similar individuals ought to have been forthcoming? Where are the successors of Miss May Turner who, in a telepathy experiment at a distance of 250 miles from Miss Ounbey, the agent, obtained scores of 19, 16, 16; of Hubert Pearce who made not only an average of 9 hits per run over 30 runs but who also achieved a "perfect score" of 25 correct hits in 25 trials; of Unzmayer who reached a score of 18, and the rest?

For many years now the Duke University E.S.P. investigations have been carried out with groups of apparently quite ordinary or unselected persons. But even these groups in America behave differently from the groups investigated by English experimenters who generally obtain only chance results. Nearly all the card-guessing experiments with groups at Duke University or the City of New York Colleges produce some sort of positive result even if the odds against chance are only 100 to 1.

These extraordinary discrepancies between conditions in this country and America are causing serious disquiet among the younger members of the Society for Psychical Research who are asking why it is they are unable to obtain these wonderful results. They are asking whether the remarkable feats described in *Extra-Sensory Perception* were due in part to the general slackness of experimental conditions which prevailed around 1934 and which may have allowed some subjects to learn the cards from their backs and others to practise deliberate fraud.

The three most remarkable chapters in Dr Rhine's book are devoted to the Psychokinesis (P.K.) experiments which appear to have originated in Rhine's own family. As everyone knows, the experiments claim that certain persons by a mere act of will can overcome the inertia of a falling die and cause it to land with an assigned face upwards more often than chance would predict. The mysterious force exerted on the die during its fall is, Dr Rhine emphatically avers, a *non-physical* force. It is *non-physical* and yet acts on matter—which sounds a contradiction of terms



does not obey the laws of mechanics and yet, in order to produce the effects it does, it must initiate changes in the angular momentum of the die at definite points in space and time. Further, it must be under the control of some intelligence—an intelligence that must be capable of performing the most elaborate calculations in an interval of about half a second or less. Unlike any other force of which we have any experience it is more successful in influencing 96 dice thrown together than a single die. It has more effect on heavy metal dice than light wooden ones. It will sometimes produce stronger effects when the operator stands 25 feet away from the rattling die than when he is quite close to it. And yet though the force possesses all these extraordinary properties it seems incapable of moving a delicately suspended needle or of influencing any delicate physical instrument. Apparently it can only be registered by some dubious and obscure statistical effects observed when a die is clumsily shaken in a cup or allowed to fall in a rotating cage.

Moreover, Dr Rhine's telekinesis appears to be of a totally different variety from that observed, say, with Rudi Schneider. Where are the teleplastic structures reported by all the earlier investigators? Where are the "mushroom-headed cantilevers" of Crawford "packed with matter in a form unknown to science"? Where is the "emanation" of Osty that interfered with a beam of infra-red rays? Are there no teleplastic "fingers" pinching the die in mid-air that Dr Rhine can photograph? How is it that darkness is not necessary to obtain the phenomenon?

Until Dr Rhine provides a satisfactory answer to these enquiries I am afraid that for most men of science, as for the present reviewer, psychokinesis à la Rhine will remain *res addubitata*.

Dr Rhine's account of the criticism which E.S.P. research in America has had to meet and overcome makes rather ludicrous reading. There was, first, he tells us the "mathematical criticism" followed by the "criticism of experimental methods". Neither ought ever to have arisen. When I commenced my own experiments in 1934 it was perfectly obvious to me that in order to apply the Binomial distribution formulae I must first of all obtain a mathematically random sequence of card symbols. It was equally obvious that experiments in which the guesser had the slightest opportunity for "learning" the cards from their backs or edges were of no value whatever. Yet, strange to say, the Duke experimenters seem to have fallen into pitfalls that an intelligent schoolboy would have avoided. Cards which could be identified by the impressions showing through the backs, others in which there were variations in the design at the edges, packs of cards in which the "rectangle" cards were cut to a different size from the rest—some of these things Dr Rhine plausibly tries to explain away in the present book, but for those who know something of the actual facts his explanations do not cut much ice.

The book is in fact Dr Rhine's version of the development of the E.S.P. cult in America. Whether we in England will ever be given a different version I do not know, but Dr Rhine's book certainly merits the word "remarkable" in more senses than one.

S. G. SOAL.

## NOTICES

TRANCE mediums or clairvoyants sometimes consent to come to Society to demonstrate before a group of sitters. It is not possible to notice of these meetings by circular or through the *Journal*, but announcements are put up on the notice-board at the Society's rooms.

Will any persons willing to act as subjects for some hypnotic experiments please communicate with the Research Officer?